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Washington, D. C. 20505

28 SEP 1978

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Honorable Edward P. Boland, Chairman
Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This is to inform you that the President has decided to declassify the "fact of" the existence of photographic reconnaissance satellites. The means by which the President will place this information into the public domain may well be in a speech at Kennedy Space Center, Cape Canaveral, Florida on 1 October 1978. However, this date is indefinite and until The President makes his statement, the "fact of" is still classified.

This step of declassifying the "fact of", which has been classified collateral Secret for the past four and one half years, is an official confirmation of what is already generally known by the informed public and has been referred to rather freely during the past few years by the American and foreign press. It is a decision that was arrived at only after lengthy study and painstaking review which has been over two years in the making.

It is realized that taking this step may engender considerable public interest in overhead reconnaissance, its capabilities, targets, forms and methods, and its overall effectiveness. The declassification action, however, extends only to the "fact of" an overhead photo reconnaissance capability, but will not include details about that program, imagery, or imagery derived products collected by that program, nor to the "fact of" all of which shall remain classified.

It is important that all Members and staff who have access to and TALENT-KEYHOLE intelligence understand that the following points pertain to this impending major policy change:

- a. The only information being declassified is the "fact of" overhead photographic reconnaissance by the U.S. Government.

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c. No "facts about" photographic reconnaissance collection, actual imagery or imagery derived information will be declassified by this action. Therefore, cleared staff personnel will continue to be bound by their secrecy agreements and there is not to be public discussion or public acknowledgement of overhead reconnaissance programs or of access to any information about overhead reconnaissance or its product.

No change in the classification of "facts about" photo satellite programs is envisioned by virtue of this planned disclosure. The only means by which we will be able to maintain continued security discipline and protection of our valuable collection programs and their unique products is through the continued diligence and cooperation of all persons who are given access.

It is recognized that the timing of this notification is very short. However, it is imperative that notification be made prior to the President's speech rather than afterwards to prevent erroneous conclusions being drawn that our photographic systems are being declassified and that discussions regarding these systems can now take place outside the classified compartmented area.

It is requested that Members of your Committee and cleared staff personnel of the Committee be briefed on the contents of this letter. We are separately notifying other Committees and Members of concern. I have asked Mr. Frederick P. Hitz, my Legislative Counsel, to make members of his staff available to assist in the briefings as required.

Yours sincerely,

SIGNED



STANSFIELD TURNER

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